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ON PAGE 2

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Suit says contras used drug ring to buy weapons

WASHINGTON [UPI]—A ring of former CIA officials and Nicaraguan rebels sold cocaine to Americans and used the profits to arm and train an anti-Nicaraguan military force, two American journalists charge in a \$23.8 million damage suit.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in Miami Thursday, alleged that the 30-man group, which includes American businessmen and Cuban-Americans, also hired a Libyan to assassinate Lewis Tambs, the U.S. ambassador to Costa Rica, and bomb the U.S. Embassies in Costa Rica and Honduras.

The organizers hoped the U.S. government would blame the Nicaraguan government and decide to invade, the complaint said. But the plans were canceled after a member of the ring—who was later killed—revealed their intentions to three other people.

"This ring," the suit said, "is still intact and is planning new terrorist actions."

The ring "laundered" the ear-

nings from the sale of thousands of kilograms of cocaine through banks in the U.S., the complaint alleged. The funds were used illegally to buy hundreds of tons of guns, ammunition and explosives from "front" shops in Miami in 1984, it said.

The reporters' allegations conflict with the findings of Justice Department investigators, who earlier this month reported no evidence that "contra" rebels or their American supporters were engaged in drug trafficking or arms smuggling.

The Christie Institute, a liberal, nonprofit law firm in Washington, filed the \$23.8 million suit on behalf of Tony Avirgan of National Public Radio and Martha Honey of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Avirgan and Honey, who are married, claim they were injured by a bomb set by the contras and their supporters in Costa Rica in May, 1984, and aimed at Eden Pastora, a rival rebel leader. The bomb killed 8 and injured more

than 25 others at a news conference called by Pastora, the suit said.

Accused conspirators include Ted Shackley, former associate deputy director for operations for the Central Intelligence Agency; Tom Clines, former chief training officer for the CIA's operations directorate; Adolfo Calero, head of a Nicaraguan contra group called FDN [Nicaraguan Democratic Force]; and John Singlaub of Boulder, Colo., a former Army major general who now is a big fund-raiser for the contras.

Also accused are nine Americans said to use their small businesses or anti-communist organizations as fronts for sending guns to the contras. Among them are Tom Posey, head of Civilian Military Assistance in Huntsville, Ala.

The reporters cited as their information sources a Nicaraguan rebel identified as "David X," who they said was killed for disclosing the operations of the ring, and a Cuban-American in Miami named Jesus Garcia, who had worked with the group.